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Letter dated 14 March 2007 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the decision adopted by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at its 40th meeting, held at Addis Ababa on 6 October 2005. I also refer to Security Council resolution 1633 (2005), of 21 October 2005, by which the Council established an International Working Group to assist the Government of Côte d'Ivoire in the implementation of its programme and consolidate and strengthen the existing follow-up mechanisms.

In this regard, I am forwarding the text of the communiqué issued by the International Working Group at the conclusion of its thirteenth ministerial meeting, held in Abidjan on 2 March 2007 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring this communiqué to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Final communiqué of the thirteenth ministerial meeting of the International Working Group on Côte d'Ivoire

Abidjan, 2 March 2007

1. The thirteenth ministerial meeting of the International Working Group was held in Abidjan on 2 March 2007 under the co-chairmanship of Mr. Nana Akufo-Addo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, and Mr. Abou Moussa, Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). In attendance were the Ministers of Benin, Burkina Faso, France and South Africa as well as the High Representative for the elections in Côte d'Ivoire, and the representatives of Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, ECOWAS, the African Union, the European Union, the International Organization of the Francophonie, and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

2. The Group heard a briefing by the Prime Minister on the state of progress of the peace process, especially with regard to the resumption of mobile court hearings, the preparations for the launching of identification, and the gradual redeployment of the State administration, in particular financial services in the north of the country.

3. The Group also examined the extremely worrying situation of the Ivorian State media. Since the decrees of 26 November 2006, the impartiality of RTI and *Fraternité Matin*, and equitable access to these media for the various political forces, as stipulated by the Pretoria Agreements, are no loner guaranteed. The Group recalls that the independence and impartiality of the State media are indispensable to the holding of free, transparent and fair elections. This is necessary for the electoral campaign to be recognized as being in conformity with international norms.

4. After hearing the report of the Minister of State, Mr. Youssouf Ouedraogo, Representative of the current Chairman of ECOWAS, on the progress made in the direct dialogue, the Group paid tribute to the President of Burkina Faso, Mr. Blaise Compaoré, for his untiring facilitation efforts in a spirit of cooperation and appeasement. It encouraged him to pursue these efforts in order to reach, as soon as possible, an agreement that can re-launch the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire in keeping with the expectations of the Ivorian populations. In this regard, the Group welcomes the fact that the direct dialogue deals with fundamental issues mentioned in resolution 1721 (2006) that are at the core of the Ivorian crisis, namely: identification, the restructuring of the defence and security forces, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, disarmament and dismantling of militias, the redeployment of the administration, and the preparation of elections. The Group appeals to the Ivorian parties to take ownership of the peace process within the framework of resolution 1721 (2006). The Group stresses that the agreement to be concluded by the Ivorian parties must permit the normalization of the situation in Côte d'Ivoire.

5. The Group heard a briefing by the commanders of the impartial forces, who mentioned the fragility of the situation in the country and recalled the security risk that would result from a stagnation of the peace process.

6. While expressing the readiness of the international community to support the re-launching of the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire, the Group wishes to stress that any global agreement reached at the direct dialogue will not be able to facilitate the settlement of the Ivorian crisis unless the signatories translate into action their will to achieve peace by fulfilling all their commitments in good faith.

7. The Group will hold its next meeting on 13 April 2007 in Côte d'Ivoire.